

May 3, 2009

## Fourth Sunday of Easter

### Reading 1

[Acts 4:8-12](#)

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said:

"Leaders of the people and elders:

If we are being examined today  
about a good deed done to a cripple,  
namely, by what means he was saved,  
then all of you and all the people of Israel should know  
that it was in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean  
whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead;  
in his name this man stands before you healed.

He is *the stone rejected by you, the builders,  
which has become the cornerstone.*

There is no salvation through anyone else,  
nor is there any other name under heaven  
given to the human race by which we are to be saved."

### Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 118:1, 8-9, 21-23, 26, 28, 29](#)

R. (22) **The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,  
for his mercy endures forever.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD  
than to trust in man.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD  
than to trust in princes.

R. **The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me  
and have been my savior.

The stone which the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone.

By the LORD has this been done;  
it is wonderful in our eyes.

R. **The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD;  
we bless you from the house of the LORD.

I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me  
and have been my savior.

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
for his kindness endures forever.

**R. The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.**

or:

**R. Alleluia.**

## **Reading II**

[1 Jn 3:1-2](#)

Beloved:

See what love the Father has bestowed on us  
that we may be called the children of God.

Yet so we are.

The reason the world does not know us  
is that it did not know him.

Beloved, we are God's children now;  
what we shall be has not yet been revealed.

We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him,  
for we shall see him as he is.

## **Gospel**

[Jn 10:11-18](#)

Jesus said:

"I am the good shepherd.

A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

A hired man, who is not a shepherd

and whose sheep are not his own,

sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away,

and the wolf catches and scatters them.

This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd,

and I know mine and mine know me,

just as the Father knows me and I know the Father;

and I will lay down my life for the sheep.

I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold.

These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice,

and there will be one flock, one shepherd.

This is why the Father loves me,

because I lay down my life in order to take it up again.

No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own.

I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again.

This command I have received from my Father."

## HOMILY

The Fourth Sunday of Easter is traditionally called Good Shepherd Sunday. We hear Jesus saying that the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. These metaphoric references about God and about us bring us poetically closer to an awareness of the wonderful humility of our God, a concept less understood from words than it is from our experience of it.

Letting go completely of heaven, God allows God to be enclosed in the defenseless and precious body of a baby, born in a stable, reared in a backwater village. Though trained as a carpenter, Jesus becomes instead an itinerant preacher drawing inspiration from the writings of the Prophets which he heard as a boy in synagogue school. There was nothing of a king or conqueror about him, yet there was everything of a lover about him. He cared for the sick and the sick of heart, the dying and those whose hearts were not life giving. His preaching was more than words. Hope, sometimes a whisper, sometimes a force, began to charge the atmosphere. They tried to raise him up to be king and he wouldn't have it. They turned on him and he knew it was time. Only he could finally seal the Covenant between God and us and gain eternal redemption for all of us with the total sacrifice of his human person, and he did. But that is not the end of the story.

After the Resurrection and the gaining of Eternal Salvation for all of us, there were those who wondered why he didn't remove all *our* crosses. He didn't remove them, he *joined* us on each of our own crosses in life. And when we allow ourselves to be open to his presence, we share in the same pure-love that enabled him to get up every time he fell, to move on and move toward our Redemption. When we fall because of our own sin or because of the sins of others, he is there with us. When we fall because of our own greed and self-centeredness or because of the greed and self-centeredness of others, he is there with us. And when we too get up with his company from our "fall", we once again in our vulnerability release from within us the forgiveness and love of God into the world. In company with Jesus we further and further bring the whole world more deeply into the Redemption Jesus won for us all.

Such is the Good Shepherd...less "known" as a king, more readily "known" as a lover. His is a love that can turn all of creation into new life. Will we make the choice to follow that Good Shepherd?

There is a challenge for us in the context of the second reading. We are more than Jesus' flock: we are "children of God" who are to "be like him."

This means that we are not only sheep who hear our Good Shepherd's voice, but we also are to become shepherds ourselves. Transformed from sheep to shepherd, are we willing to take up the life he has laid down? Can you think of small ways to become less of a hired hand and more of a good shepherd for others in your life?

*Henry Ormond, O.Carm.*